

Banker's delight



LIBBY ZNAIMER

Scott Tannas is the CEO of Western Financial Group, a banking and insurance conglomerate based in High River, Alta., with \$300-million in assets. It consists of a chartered bank, an insurance agency network and a life insurance company. It has 650 employees.

What time do you start? I work about 50 to 55 hours a week, not counting travel. I start at around 7:30 a.m., and try to be out by 5 p.m. I like to go in after dinner on Sunday, and work for about five hours to get ready for the week.

How often do you take work home? I don't take work home. I just come back to the office if I have to. My commute is less than 60 seconds, so it's not a problem. It's easier to work from the office, and I like to maintain a separation between work and home. I work hard at a work-life balance because I have a large, young family — four kids between the ages of nine and 17. When I'm at home I concentrate on them. It's easy in a small town with no big commutes. For instance, on

Fridays, I zip over to the hockey rink to watch my boys play between 3:30 and 4 p.m. Then I just go back to work.

What do you wear? Monday to Thursday, it's business-casual, which means slacks with a shirt and a sweater. On Fridays, I wear jeans and logo wear. Around here, the only people who wear suits are lawyers and undertakers. Of course, I get dressed up when I go to Toronto for business.

How much e-mail do you get per day? How many do you delete without reading? I get 15 to 20 e-mail messages a day, and only have to delete one or two. I answer most of them — 80% — immediately. I'm slower with the rest because they need more thought or action.

What about phone calls? I get 15 to 20 calls, and I take virtually all of them. It's been ingrained.

How often do customers call you directly? They don't call much any more, but I absolutely take those calls because they are from customers who really want to talk to the boss of the bosses. By the time they get to me, those people have been up the line through a series of managers, so it's not really about getting a certain outcome. They want to tell their story and hear me say that I'm sorry. We usually have a good visit. It happens maybe once every six months.

How many meetings do you attend? I have one or two meetings a day. I like them when they're about an action and I feel

like I'm getting something done.

How much time do you spend on your cellphone? It's not as much time as I used to. I carry it with me but turn it off in meetings, and I don't bring it into the house. When I'm on the road, I use it a lot.

What about your BlackBerry? I'm addicted to my BlackBerry, but I don't see the bills so I don't know exactly how much I use it. I carry it everywhere, take it home, look at it on the weekend, at night, and first thing in the morning. It's really a fabulous way to keep in touch.

Is your desk messy or neat? What's on it? It's far from messy, but I'm not a clean-desk guy. I have an in-tray, a laptop, a docking station for my BlackBerry and a Rolodex — though I don't know why because I have all that information electronically. I have a red file for immediate action, a green file for stuff that's less important and a couple of project files.

What's the best part of your job? Being able to build a business where I live, and run it in a way that fits into my life and the community I grew up in. Very few people have been able to do this on the scale that I've done. High River, after all, is a town of 9,000 people.

What's the worst part? I love every aspect of my job. Honest, I'm not spinning you.

The best perk? When an insurance company took me to the

Masters' Golf Tournament. It was a one-day marathon, we had to change planes twice and then get into a van, but it was fabulous.

What's your pet peeve? I have a lot of trouble with negative people, people who just refuse to find a way to solve a problem or find a way past where things sit right now.

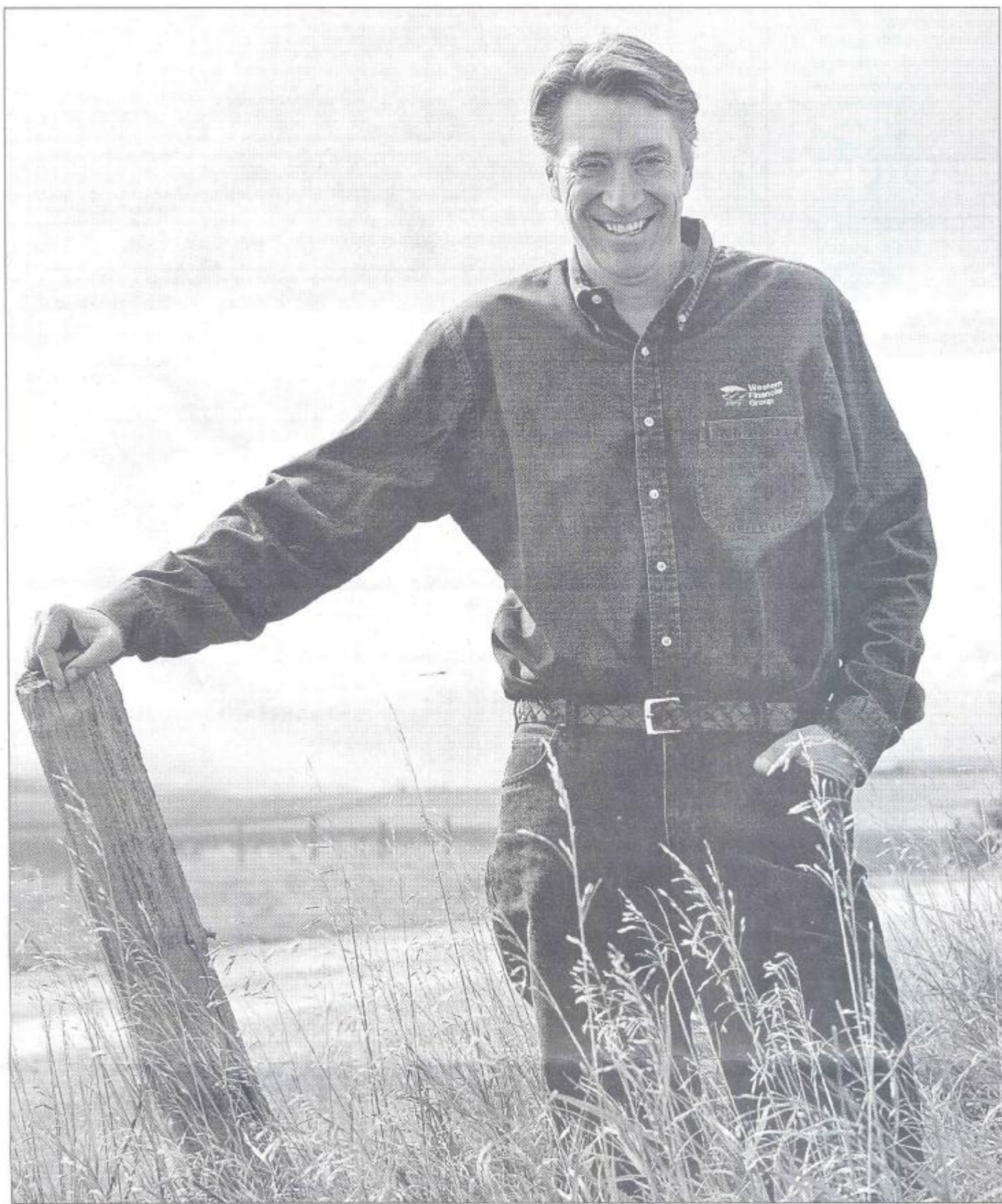
What are your favourite places for lunch? We have a few small-town cafés and three Chinese buffets. My favourite is Dumpling Day (Friday) at the High River Inn.

Do you have hobbies, sports or a fitness routine? I have a decent gym at home and I work out with a treadmill and weights six times a week. I love golf. My handicap is in the mid-teens, and in season I get out three or four times a month.

How much do you read for work or otherwise? I don't have a lot of heavy reading for work, but I like to read management books and biographies by successful people. The last one was Katherine Graham's *Personal History*. If I'm travelling, I take two books with me, one on business enrichment and one trashy novel. I read *Time*, *Maclean's* and a magazine called *Cowboys and Indians*.

What's your management philosophy or guiding management principle? We have four principles: truth, fairness, value and loyalty. We use them as yardsticks for everything we do.

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MIKE STURK

Scott Tannas at home in High River, Alta. : "Around here, the only people who wear suits are lawyers and undertakers."